

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Semicon Associates

Kentucky Manufacturing Assistance Center

Semicon Improves Quality To Become Competitive

Client Profile:

Semicon Associates, founded in 1953, is a world leader in dispenser cathode fabrication, one of only two such U.S. manufacturers. Located in a 30,000 square foot plant in Lexington, Kentucky, Semicon's 80-plus employees produce a series of dispenser cathodes. These components are used in the communications, space, medical research, and defense industries.

Situation:

Semicon began an initiative of implementing near-term improvements that would help the firm better serve its current customers and be competitively positioned to expand its customer base. In addition, Semicon management wanted to develop a plan to ensure that the company would be strong and successful in the future. Semicon contracted with the Kentucky Manufacturing Assistance Center (KMAC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, to help the firm meet both its short- and long-term objectives through strategic planning and ISO 9000:2000 quality controls.

Solution:

KMAC began the strategic planning process with a preparation phase during which critical information is gathered to help the firm objectively assess its short- and long-term market situation. That information feeds into the next phase, known as the consensus-building phase. KMAC utilized an internationally known software tool called Aliah THINK to help cross-functional teams reach a consensus about the firm's future direction and the steps the company needed to take to reach its goals. Finally, KMAC trained Semicon personnel in work breakdown structure and project management to help them implement and complete the strategic action steps.

KMAC also worked with Semicon to implement the processes and procedures necessary for the firm to meet ISO 9000:2000 standards. Implementing these international quality standards has helped the firm standardize its processes and procedures, resulting in improvements in quality control and a better position from which to expand its customer base and market reach. Though Semicon has not applied for certification, it is reviewed annually by an RAB inspector to ensure continued compliance with ISO standards.

Results:

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Achieved a more competitive and profitable position.

Reduced lead time.

Created a greater opportunity for growth.

Increased throughput.

Created 10 additional jobs.

Reduced defect rate.

Produced a cost savings of \$115,000.

Improved customer development and retention.

Increased sales by \$400,000.

Improved employee skills and reduced turnover.

Testimonial:

"As a mission-critical defense supplier, we at Semicon are very proud of the part we play in keeping our country's defenses strong. We are better able to serve our customers in the near term as a result of the Kentucky Manufacturing Assistance Center's assistance in improving our production processes and quality control. And, based on our strategic planning efforts which were spearheaded by KMAC, our firm has developed a roadmap that will lead to future success."

Jeffrey Waldal, President